

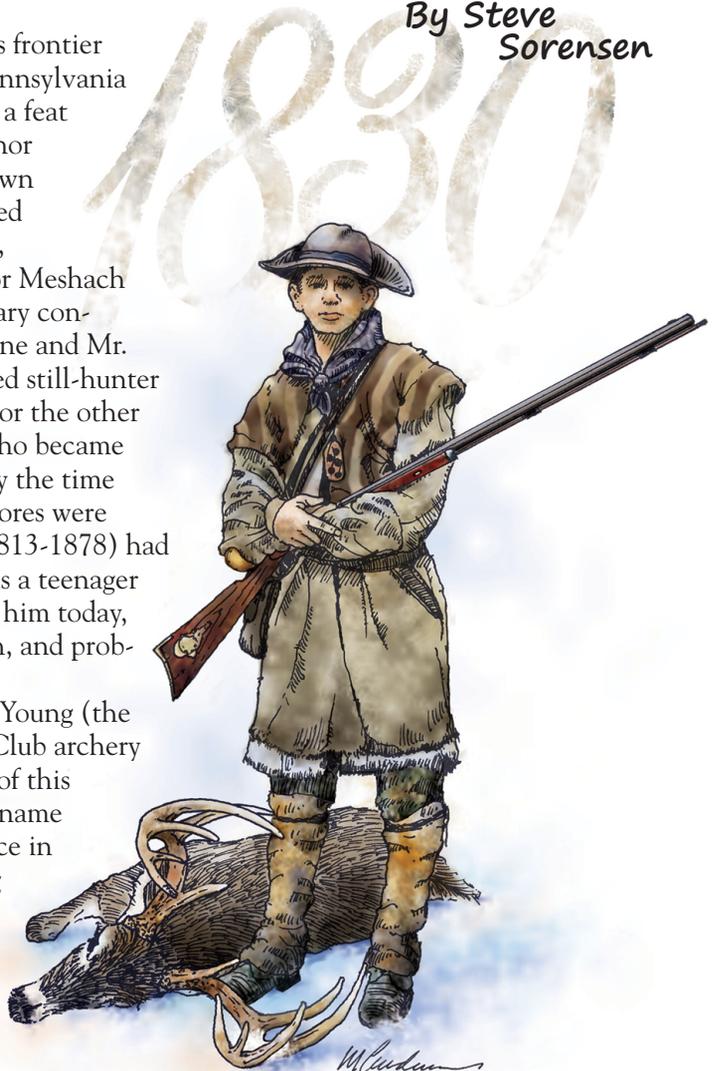
After 135 years, official scorers finally put a tape on the antlers. The forgotten story of the oldest entry in the big game records . . .

# The Arthur Young Buck

By Steve  
Sorensen

AMONG America's frontier deer hunters, a Pennsylvania teenager accomplished a feat neither Daniel Boone nor Davy Crockett are known to have done. Not famed deerslayer Philip Tome, John James Audubon or Meshach Browning — all legendary contemporaries of Mr. Boone and Mr. Crockett. Not renowned still-hunter Theodore S. VanDyke or the other Theodore — the one who became President Roosevelt. By the time these illustrious Theodores were born, Arthur Young (1813-1878) had already accomplished as a teenager what still distinguishes him today, 200 years after his birth, and probably forever forward.

Unlike another Art Young (the one of Pope & Young Club archery fame), few have heard of this Arthur Young. But his name is of singular significance in Pennsylvania's hunting lore; and not just in Pennsylvania. Arthur Young, from Farmer's Valley in McKean County, has a unique



and unchallenged place in the chronicles of hunting in North America.

Although the wildlife history of the era is sketchy, one deer hunting fact is that in 1830, 17-year-old Arthur Young shot a giant whitetail buck that is now, and almost surely will remain so, the oldest entry in the Boone & Crockett Club's and Pennsylvania's record books. And in B&C's record book not just for whitetails, but for every species on the continent. No elk, moose, Dall's sheep, mule deer, grizzly or black bear entry is older. In fact, no animal is documented in any record book anywhere in the world with a date earlier than Arthur Young's enormous Pennsylvania whitetail.

## THE MAN

Arthur was born at Norwich, Chenango County, New York, on March 26, 1813. Eight years later his father was one of the first to settle at Farmer's Valley in McKean County, Pennsylvania, an area of untamed wilderness, and a frontier unfriendly even to the hardest of pioneering people.

Arthur grew up to become a farmer and supplemented his income by market hunting. He's credited with killing about 1,500 deer during his lifetime, a detail best understood by considering that market hunting was legal and commonplace at that time. Back then the meat-packing industry

hadn't been developed yet, so meat didn't come from cattle ranches. Because refrigerated rail boxcars weren't invented until 1851, meat came from relatively local sources, and hunting was a livelihood for backwoodsmen in those hardscrabble times.

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What else do we know about Arthur Young? His newspaper obituary mentioned he was "...one of the noted hunters of his day, and had the reputation of having killed a greater number of deer,

bears, panthers and wildcats than any other individual in the county."

So, as a farmer and woodsman scratching out a living in the wilds of Pennsylvania, Young was known as an accomplished hunter from an area that can be thought of as the cradle of deer hunting culture. But the record of the remarkable buck he killed never came to light until 87 years after he died, perhaps a sign of his humility and a "mind-his-own-business" attitude.

## THE TIME

To put Young's remarkable whitetail into perspective, he shot this buck before many noteworthy historic events of that decade—before McCormick invented his mechanical reaper, before the battle at the Alamo, before Sam Colt developed his famous revolver, before steamboats began to cross the Atlantic, and before the birth of Theodore Roosevelt

Sr., the father of the future president who would establish the Boone & Crockett Club 57 years later.

Young shot his buck only 54 years after the American Revolution, when the country was composed of only 24 states. The nation's seventh president, Andrew Jackson, was in office in 1830. The War Between the States was still 31 years into the future.

He offered a son to that war, H.A. Young, who served as a corporal with the famous Pennsylvania Bucktails of McKean County, and survived wounds suffered at Gettysburg.

Arthur Young couldn't have made his own claim for a place in the record books, because record-keeping wasn't begun until long after he died. And neither Young nor anyone at the time could have had any idea what a world-class buck was, as there was no basis for comparison. Even when the Boone & Crockett Club was formed in 1887, no one was keeping records, and the club didn't adopt the record-keeping system used today until 1950. That's 120 years after the huge buck was killed, but it would not be scored until 15 more years had passed.

## THE HUNT

No one knows what the weather was like on the day of Young's historic hunt, or exactly

what fall or winter day it was, but a 1965 letter to the Boone & Crockett Club from Young's great grandson C.R. Studholme (now deceased) documented enough important facts to authenticate the antlers for scoring. Besides possessing the antlers, Studholme took what information he had from written memoirs of his great grandmother, Arthur Young's widow, Laurinda.

The hunt took place in an orchard on the hillside a few hundred yards above the headwaters of Potato Creek, along what is today Route 446, near Goodwin Cemetery, where Young is buried. Although the hunt would have been much like a million other hunts when the trigger was pulled, in this case the hunt turned into a hunt for historic details that could easily have been lost to time. We would likely know nothing about this buck if it weren't for Arthur Young's descendants, who appreciated both their frontier

ancestor and his deer's hefty antlers. They ensured the survival of the old rack, and not only that—and here's where the story gets interesting—the family also preserved two other physical relics from that notable hunt.

## THE ARTIFACTS

Arthur purchased the rifle when he was 14. Family annals reveal that



his older brother, Clinton, was away from home during early 1827, and he told Arthur that if he would mind his trapline, Arthur could keep the proceeds from the furs taken. After Arthur sold the furs, which included mink, otter and bear, he traveled to Buffalo, N.Y., to purchase the rifle.

The rifle was a flintlock muzzle-loader made by Patrick Smith of Buffalo. At some later time it was converted to percussion ignition. The powderhorn also still exists and, such as many others at that time, was embellished with engravings, featuring animals including a fish, an owl, possibly a passenger pigeon, a deer (or elk), plus a tree laden with fruit. The years 1769 and 1770 also are engraved on the horn.

One of Arthur's ancestors acquired the powderhorn in Rhode Island in 1769, and it had remained in the family in their moves from Rhode Island to New York to Pennsylvania. All three of these historic artifacts—antlers, rifle and powderhorn—remained in the family since Young originally acquired them. And

they reinforce the credibility of C.R. Studholme's letter of authenticity to the Boone & Crockett Club.

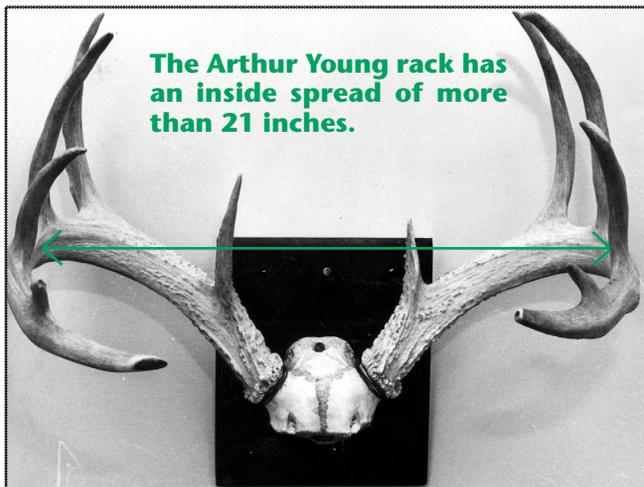
Professor M.A. Leeson, in his 1890 book *History Of The Counties Of McKean, Elk, Cameron and Potter, Pennsylvania* (published by J.H. Beers, Chicago, and available online), noted that "This gun, his first purchase, which he always used in his expeditions in search of game, he bequeathed to his son, D.C., who cherishes it as a most valuable heirloom." D.C., who became a prominent merchant in Smethport, also inherited the antlers from the 1830 buck.

## THE DEER

Has the family preserved a photograph of Arthur Young and his buck? That would be priceless, especially considering the fact that he killed the buck when photography was in its infancy. It wasn't until 1839 that anyone even used the word "photography."

Today the antlers are fastened to a simple board for hanging on the wall.

Was the head ever mounted? Not likely. Taxidermy methods and materials were primitive, and few people could perform the magic of moving skin to a form in the shape of an animal. Arthur Young probably gave no thought to a mount, and because taxidermy was just becoming common at about the time he





Young passed away in 1878, 87 years before his buck would enter the records. He rests beside his beloved wife Laurinda, who survived until 1906. The gravesite is only a few hundred yards from where it's believed he killed the great buck.

Today, Arthur Young's buck's ancient rack is privately owned. The owner wishes to remain anonymous, and would not allow any photos of the antlers or its companion artifacts for this article. Nevertheless, although I haven't held the antlers in my hands, it's a privilege to tell the story about such a notable piece of whitetail history.

We can thank the descendants of Arthur Young for having the foresight to preserve his trophy. And without the Boone & Crockett Club and the Pennsylvania Big Game Scoring Program, the Arthur Young rack would still exist, but we'd know nothing about it. So we can thank the Boone & Crockett Club and the Pennsylvania Game Commission for recognizing and recording one of the oldest pieces of whitetail history in the state, and for securing a place for Arthur Young, one of Pennsylvania's earliest hunting legends.



### COVER PAINTING BY ERNEST DURPHY

THE DEPTH of the mystique surrounding the story of this historic Pennsylvania buck and the hunter who harvested it more than 180 years ago in Farmer's Valley, McKean County, just a few miles from my home, was the catalyst for my oil rendering of this deer of great significance.

The hills typical of the region and the weather so common here in late November, early December, as I surmised the timing of the hunt to have taken place in 1830, culminated in the result you see on this month's cover of Arthur Young's great buck. I call it "Farmer's Valley 1830." Enjoy!



— *Ernest Durphy*

To order prints of "Farmer's Valley 1830," contact the artist via his website [www.ernestdurphy.com](http://www.ernestdurphy.com), email at [darlenedurphy@gmail.com](mailto:darlenedurphy@gmail.com) or call 814-598-0418.